

## **Cal/EPA EJ Action Plan Pilot Projects Addressing Cumulative Impacts and Precautionary Approach March 25, 2005**

In 2004, Cal/EPA developed the Intra-agency Environmental Justice Strategy (EJ Strategy) and the EJ Action Plan, that jointly form the “Two-Pathway Approach” to achieve environmental justice. The EJ Strategy is the product of a multi-year collaboration between the Cal/EPA Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (IWG), the Cal/EPA Advisory Committee on Environmental Justice (CEJAC), and EJ stakeholders (including community, local government, business, industry, and tribal representatives). It sets forth the Cal/EPA’s EJ vision, mission, core values, goals, and objectives that will guide the Agency’s boards, departments, and office (BDOs) in integrating environmental justice into their programs, policies, and activities. In addition, it provides the foundation for addressing EJ issues and would be revised as necessary in view of evolving environmental justice issues, programs, policies, and activities.

Complementing the EJ Strategy, the EJ Action Plan specifies a set of short-term, community-oriented projects. In its February 16, 2005 meeting, in consideration of the recommendations from CEJAC, the IWG adopted the following working definitions to guide the pilot projects:

**Cumulative Impacts** means exposures, public health or environmental effects from the combined emissions and discharges in a geographic area including environmental pollution from all sources, whether single or multi-media, routinely, accidentally or otherwise released. Impacts will take into account sensitive populations and socioeconomic factors where applicable and to the extent data are available.

**Precautionary Approach** means taking anticipatory action to protect public health or the environment if a reasonable threat of serious harm exists based upon the best available science and other relevant information even if absolute and undisputed scientific evidence is not available to assess the exact nature and extent of the risk.

Some of the pilot projects have been initiated to serve as the primary mechanism for exploring the complexity of cumulative impacts and precautionary approaches. One project will focus in enhancing public participation and empowering community capacity. Another project is aimed at developing a cost effective approach for reducing levels of contamination where illegal drug have been produced.

The pilot projects will collect environmental emissions/discharge, exposure, and health risk data; and identify data gaps at the community level. As part of the study design, the working definitions of cumulative impacts and precautionary approach will be applied to the extent feasible in applicable situations.

Cal/EPA's BDOs will also take the necessary steps to promote meaningful participation by the EJ stakeholders in all phases of the pilot projects. BDOs will consider CEJAC's and Local Advisory Groups' recommendations and modify the scope of the project, if necessary. CEJAC will also assist in providing input and recommendations from a regional and statewide perspective for the pilot projects.

It is envisioned the results from these projects will assist in developing a common approach that can be followed by BDOs in:

- a. Assessment of cumulative impacts,
- b. Application of precautionary approaches,
- c. Standardized protocol for public participation, and
- d. A list of actions to increase community capacity in decision-making process.

The following pages provide the summaries of each pilot project.